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in Indiana's Public Schools, 1900-1930

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# Education in the Name of “Improvement”

## The Influence of Eugenic Thought and Practice in Indiana’s Public Schools, 1900-1930

ROBERT OSGOOD

At the twentieth annual state conference of the Indiana State Board of Charities and Correction, J. W. Sale, a prominent member of the board of trustees for the Indiana School for Feeble-minded Youth, sounded a strong alarm to the state regarding its “defective citizens.” Sale asserted with confidence that the condition of “feeble-mindedness” was largely inherited, that it was “incurable,” and that without proper attention it would become “a tremendous burden of expense to every community.” He then argued that if “defectives” in Indiana were to “be gathered together” and isolated from society and “the defectives of other States could be prevented from entering,” the ultimate result would be the almost complete eradication of mental and other forms of defect “within a generation.” “[T]he criminal class would be reduced,” he claimed, and “arson, incest, illegitimacy, costs of criminal prosecutions

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and care of criminals would be lessened and eventually a great economic saving would be accomplished."<sup>1</sup>

Sale delivered his remarks during the height of eugenic influence on American thought to an audience of like-minded reformers committed to improving social conditions in Indiana. The state's political and medical leadership considered eugenics a primary weapon in its war against social pathology, one to be used in concert by state institutions, local governments, public schools, and various social services eager to rid Indiana of "inferior" members of its population. Sale's comments clearly reflected the then-current belief that a eugenic-based approach to social melioration was both right and necessary: the terminology, the alarmist tone, and the vision of a brighter future that would be free from the intractable problems caused by corruptive breeding and inferior stock, all represented the essence of a worldview framed by a eugenic perspective. As a fundamental tenet of many Progressive-era visions of social improvement, eugenics became imbedded in much of the discourse of the reform movements that characterized Indiana and the nation during the early twentieth century.

One of the arenas in which eugenics had a strong impact was public education. From 1900 to 1930 public education systems in the United States were shaped profoundly by Progressive-era concerns with science, classification, and human betterment. This was a crucial period not only for the development of public education in the nation, but also for the advancement of eugenics as a factor in the development of social policy. This concurrence assured that public schools would be effected significantly by eugenic thought and practice. According to historian Steven Selden, advocates of eugenics represented a self-appointed elite group of individuals drawn from fields of medicine, public health, education, science, psychology, sociology, and politics. Many of these individuals, in turn, contributed ideas and perspectives that proved crucial to public education's adaptations of eugenic principles. Given that public schools had long been considered essential vehicles for addressing civic and moral issues, as well as solving social problems, it is no surprise that they became central features of efforts to advocate and implement eugenic-based policy throughout the United States. From school

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<sup>1</sup>J. W. Sale, "The Feeble-Minded," *The Indiana Bulletin of Charities and Correction* (hereafter the *Indiana Bulletin*), 89 (June 1912), 194.



Office of Public Schools, Indianapolis, 1905. In the first three decades of the twentieth century, public education was “shaped profoundly” by scientific theories, including eugenics.

Courtesy of the Bass Photo Co. Collection, Indiana Historical Society

organization to curriculum development to teacher training, eugenics found its way into the psyche and soul of public education: in part because schools had long been agents for social progress, and in part because their emphasis on social selection, differentiation, stratification, and preparation of most, if not all, elements of the population rendered them natural allies in eugenics’ efforts to improve society. Importantly, such developments also found roots in the Progressive Era, the sweeping movement that dominated American society during this period.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Steven Selden, *Inheriting Shame: The Story of Eugenics and Racism in America* (New York, 1999), 90. For other comprehensive histories of the eugenics movement in the United States



Indiana's schools were not immune to these powerful emergent forces in science and education. Indeed, in the early twentieth century, many prominent educators eagerly embraced ideas about the promise and limits of education based on eugenic principles of hereditary fitness and race improvement. It is difficult to understand completely the development of mental testing, curriculum tracking, and special education in the state without grasping the role of eugenics during this period. This essay explores public education in Indiana during the first three decades of the 1900s through the lens of hereditarian and eugenic ideas. It shows, for the first time, the extent to which these ideas informed patterns of pedagogy, student stratification and placement, and most importantly, the narratives and policy statements of school professionals in the state. The article focuses on three specific aspects of this landscape: the public language of public education, the rise of mental testing and other modes of student assessment, and the development of special programs for educating students identified as gifted. It demonstrates that Indiana's pioneering role in the American eugenics movement made the Hoosier state well primed for the serious infusion of hereditarian ideas into educational theory and practice.

Indiana represents an informative case study of how national developments played out in a state that contained both large urban as well as isolated rural school districts. School personnel across the state wrestled with many of the same concerns, followed many of the same

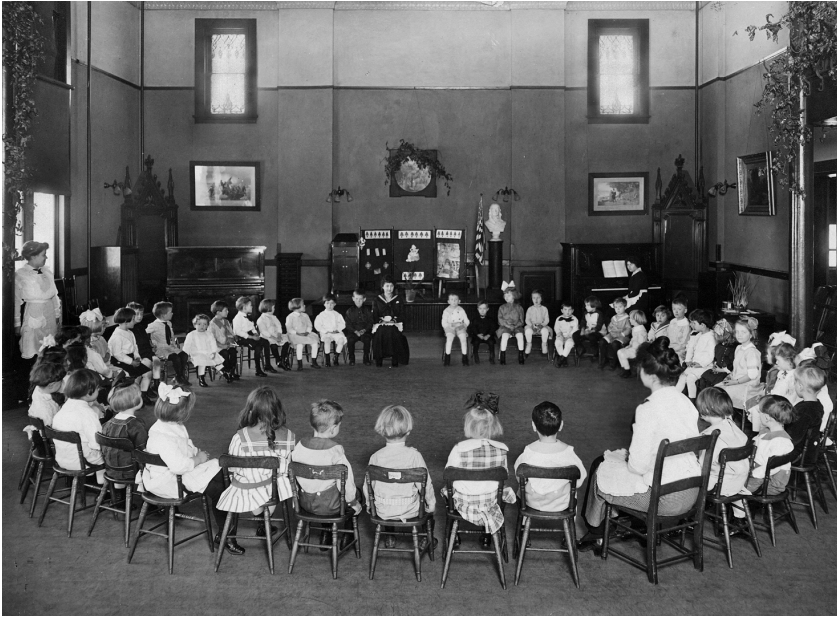
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see Edwin Black, *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* (New York, 2003); Mark H. Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1963); Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995); Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (Berkeley, Calif., 2001); Donald K. Pickens, *Eugenics and the Progressives* (Nashville, Tenn., 1968). For some general histories of American education during this period see Lawrence Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957* (New York, 1961); Maurice R. Berube, *American School Reform: Progressive, Equity, and Excellence Movements, 1883-1993* (Westport, Conn., 1994); Herbert Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958*, 3rd ed. (New York, 2004); David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974); David Nasaw, *Schooled to Order: A Social History of Public Schooling in the United States* (New York, 1979); Raymond E. Callahan, *Education and the Cult of Efficiency: A Study of the Social Forces That Have Shaped the Administration of the Public Schools* (Chicago, Ill., 1962); and William Reese, *Power and the Promise of School Reform: Grassroots Movements during the Progressive Era* (Boston, Mass., 1986). A recent work that melds themes in eugenics, education, and race is Ann Gibson Winfield, *Eugenics and Education in America: Institutionalized Racism and the Implications of History, Ideology, and Memory* (New York, 2007).

practices, and experienced many of the same expectations faced by other locations across the country. Indeed, Indiana played a sizable role in some of these developments: many of its prominent public figures advocated for eugenics, and the state government paid close attention to many of the concerns and claims raised by those advocates. Consequently, schools in the state provide a fertile ground for exploring more specific relations between eugenics and school policy and practice.

The history of public school development in Indiana followed paths similar to those in other midwestern states, but also experienced some unique turns. The original state constitution of 1816 addressed education only in the broadest of terms, consequently, regional differences led to serious disagreements among the populace and elected legislators about the necessity and appropriateness of state involvement in developing common schools and supporting them through state taxes. Eventually the 1816 constitution was deemed inadequate, and another constitution was written and adopted in 1851. Largely through the advocacy and persuasive rhetoric of Caleb Mills, then president of Wabash College, the new constitution established a state-authorized school system. A state superintendent of public instruction was installed in 1852, soon followed by a state board of education. However, resistance to tax-supported schools persisted for two decades, inhibiting the development of a statewide public school structure that could be more readily found in the neighboring states of Ohio and Michigan.

Eventually national trends toward state-authorized school systems, supported by statewide taxes, did take root in Indiana. The first comprehensive compulsory education law passed the legislature in 1897; this was strengthened every few years, with major legislation regarding school attendance or exclusion of student populations passing in 1901, 1913, and 1920. By the turn of the century, large cities such as Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, and Gary had their own complex school districts, with Indianapolis and Gary receiving national attention for progressivist approaches to teaching, curriculum, and school operation from the 1890s into the 1920s. Direct state funding of local schools was authorized in 1905, yet much of Indiana was still highly rural in character and demography. Indeed, despite furtive movement toward a more state-centered public school system, Indiana had well over 10,000 separate, local agencies (districts, towns, townships) responsible for supporting public education in 1890. These agencies combined featured fewer than 600 schools with more than one classroom. Throughout the 1910s, several state agencies reported extensively about the poor quality



Teachers with children at Indiana Teachers College, 1914. By the turn of the century, the state had become actively involved in teacher training, promoting scientific practices of orderly environment and specialized pedagogy.

Courtesy of the Bass Photo Co. Collection, Indiana Historical Society

of many rural (as well as, to be fair, more urban) schools and districts. During the latter part of the 1920s, over 6,000 one-room schoolhouses still existed in every part of the state.<sup>3</sup>

Teacher training in Indiana also followed national developments. For much of the nineteenth century, local districts, and the state in general, paid little attention to a potential teacher's formal training. Indiana

<sup>3</sup>Richard G. Boone, *A History of Education in Indiana* (New York, 1892), 293; Fassett A. Cotton, *Education in Indiana, 1793-1934* (Bluffton, Ind., 1934), 201-41; Ross F. Lockridge and Herbert L. Heller, *The Story of Indiana*, 3rd ed. (Oklahoma City, Okla., 1958), 376-78; *Annual Report of the Department of Public Instruction of the State of Indiana, For the Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 1925* ([Indianapolis], [1926]), 83-85. Indianapolis schools during the late nineteenth century are prominently featured in Joseph Mayer Rice, *The Public School System of the United States* (New York, 1969), a reprint of Rice's series of nine articles on public schools originally published in *Forum* magazine from October 1892 through June 1893. The unique features of Gary's schools during the Progressive Era are examined closely in Ronald D. Cohen, *Children of the Mill: Schooling and Society in Gary, Indiana, 1906-1960* (New York, 2002).

University began to provide teacher training permanently in 1868; the state's first normal school (the popular term for teacher training institutions at the time) opened in Terre Haute in 1870. In addition, local districts continued to provide their own programs on an as-needed basis, either via informal institutes or through departments in traditional private or public colleges. By the early 1900s, however, standardized teacher credentialing had become a much more important issue: public school enrollment had increased dramatically, and states took a much closer interest in the quality of the teachers found in public school classrooms. A second state-supported teacher training institution opened in Muncie in 1918. Normal schools were gradually replaced by public as well as private teachers' colleges by the 1920s. The state became much more actively involved in not only training teachers but also setting credentialing requirements. Furthermore, training for special education began to take hold in the 1920s, either through the state teacher training institutions or through workshops and other professional development activities offered by the state school for mentally disabled children in Fort Wayne.<sup>4</sup>

The students attending Indiana's public schools also reflected the state's demographic composition in terms of ancestral origin, wealth, home life, and ability to perform in school. The state was overwhelmingly white in racial origin; this population had emigrated from wealthier and more established New England, as well from some of the poorest areas of Appalachia. Consequently, the range of socio-economic status in the state was quite wide. African Americans constituted a small portion of Indiana's populace. They were concentrated in the major metropolitan areas closer to Chicago and Indianapolis, the latter of which had a sizable and influential—although highly segregated—African American community. By the late 1920s, the state's school systems were typically segregated by race.

The rise of special education settings for handicapped students in the state paralleled national trends and reflected many of these conditions and assumptions. In an 1896 article, Ernest Bicknell, secretary of the Indiana Board of State Charities and Correction (BSC) at the time,

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<sup>4</sup>Boone, *A History of Education in Indiana*, 381-401; Cotton, *Education in Indiana*, 352-68; Charles A. McGonagle, "Teacher Training Course at the School for Feeble-Minded Youth," *Indiana Bulletin*, 181 (April 1930), 160-62; L. P. Harshman, "Training Teachers for Special Classes," *Indiana Bulletin*, 191, 192 (March and April 1931), 206-209.

stated that of approximately 95,000 "feeble-minded persons in the United States," 5,568 lived in Indiana. This compared with Illinois (5,249), Ohio (8,235), and Michigan (3,218). Indianapolis's estimated number of such residents (230) was dramatically lower than that of Chicago (2,500) and even Cincinnati (460). Although the compulsory attendance laws of 1901 and 1913 technically still prohibited enrollment of students deemed unfit to receive school instruction, the annual state superintendent reports saw a dramatic increase in the amount of information and discussion dedicated to special classes and services during the early 1900s. The 1925 report lamented the sizable presence of "misfits" in Indiana public schools, and openly questioned "if such children will fill a more serviceable place in society than if they had been left to grow up in isolation and totally ignorant of the fundamentals of good government." The 1924 report gave an indication of the scope of the investment to that point: out of a total of 614,212 elementary and secondary school students in Indiana, only 1,557 were in special classes for those "mentally and physically deficient"; all of these were in city districts. That number increased dramatically following a 1931 law which provided state support to local districts for such classes and programs.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout the early 1900s, Indiana could claim a central role in efforts to promote eugenics-based policies and practices in the United States, being home to several individuals who had achieved national prominence by addressing social and individual conditions such as insanity, mental defect, poverty, and poor health. As superintendents of the Indiana Asylum for Feeble-minded Youth, Alexander Johnson and George Bliss were national figures in the practice of institutionalization for persons identified as feeble-minded. Amos Butler was widely known for his work as a zoologist and lengthy tenure as the secretary of the Indiana Board of State Charities, a position which provided a forum for his definitive views on the consequences of mental defect and the troubling proliferation of inferior persons and families. The state also collab-

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<sup>5</sup>Ernest Bicknell, "Feeble-Mindedness as an Inheritance," in the *Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction*, Isabel C. Barrows, ed. (Boston, Mass., 1896), 219-20; *Annual Report of the Department of Public Instruction of the State of Indiana, For the Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 1925* ([Indianapolis], [1926]), 117; *Report of the Department of Public Instruction of the State of Indiana, For the Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 1924* (Indianapolis, 1925), 5; Robert L. Osgood, "From 'Public Liabilities' to 'Public Assets': Special Education for Children with Mental Retardation in Indiana Public Schools, 1908-1931," *Indiana Magazine of History*, 98 (September 2002), 203.

orated directly with the New York-based Eugenics Record Office (ERO), an organization referred to as “the epicenter of the American eugenics movement” during the 1910s and 1920s. The ERO worked closely with the state to support research commissioned by the Indiana Committee on Mental Defectives (ICMD). This group, formed by Governor Samuel Ralston in 1915, and funded by Ralston and two succeeding governors until 1925, sponsored sweeping field research projects designed to determine the nature and extent of feeble-mindedness in the state and develop policies to reduce, and ultimately eradicate, the condition. Many of the ERO’s investigations focused on school operations. Indiana also contributed its own families to the infamous collection of hereditary studies of defectiveness and degeneracy, including the Dorbets and the Tribe of Ishmael. Consequently, advocates as well as critics of eugenics across the country paid close attention to what happened in Indiana.<sup>6</sup>

Interestingly, Indiana’s preoccupation with inferior students and its application of the principles of eugenics to its population focused much more intently on defect associated with national origin and immigrant status than on the concept of race as a biological construct. While the term “race” was used extensively throughout the United States at the time, its context in eugenics coincided as much with what we today would term ethnicity or national heritage, as with fundamental genetic racial distinctions among humans. As noted earlier, the state’s number of African American residents during the early 1900s was quite small, with most living in segregated sectors of the largest cities. In contrast, the political and educational leaders of the state responded knowingly to the pervasive anti-immigrant sentiments of the early twentieth century. Fueled largely by H. H. Goddard’s determinations that most immigrants coming through Ellis Island were “moron” grade or lower in terms of intellect, such sentiments translated into direct condemnation of whites who relocated to Indiana from Appalachia, a view which historian Alexandra Minna Stern captures vividly as “beware the Kentucky hill-folk.” Stern describes how social reformers, especially field workers

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<sup>6</sup>Jason S. Lantzer and Alexandra Minna Stern, “Building a Fit Society: Indiana’s Eugenics Crusaders,” *Traces of Indiana and Midwestern History*, 19 (Winter 2007), 8. For a detailed discussion of these developments see Robert L. Osgood, “The Menace of the Feeble-minded: George Bliss, Amos Butler, and the Indiana Committee on Mental Defectives,” *Indiana Magazine of History*, 97 (December 2001), 253-77.



hired by the ICMD, stressed the drastically inferior character of Appalachian whites found in rural areas of the state. The widespread suspicion of this "folk"—coupled with assumptions about their hereditary lineage and consequent degenerate qualities, as well as their significant numbers—assured that the focus of efforts to "improve the race" would be on them. As with other districts across the nation, Indianapolis did establish racially segregated classes for defectives in its schools. However, the vast majority of these children were ethnic whites, and discussions of defective children in schools rarely if ever made note of whether a child was white or black.<sup>7</sup>

The state focused on the importance of the medical and intellectual inspection of all children as well as the need for all public social service agencies to categorize, stratify, and otherwise organize children and their families to promote social efficiency and a eugenic philosophy. While by no means the only sites where such practices were to occur, Indiana schools assumed a key role in these initiatives. In each of its three major reports—issued in 1916, 1918-19, and 1922—the ICMD addressed the importance of public education in improving the genetic stock of Indiana residents. The reports included studies of specific school districts, rural as well as urban, that analyzed the number of feeble-minded children, described the structures to accommodate them, and offered recommendations for further action. State conferences, such as those of the Indiana State Teachers Association, featured state school officials as well as speakers with national reputations who called on public schools to assume central roles in effectively differentiating among "superior and inferior stocks" of people. With public schools leading the charge in sorting children, testing their mental capacities, and making employment decisions for them based on their measured intelligence, school performance, and family background, Indiana had a system in place that manifested much of the eugenics agenda.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Alexandra Minna Stern, "'We Cannot Make a Silk Purse Out of a Sow's Ear': Eugenics in the Hoosier Heartland," *Indiana Magazine of History*, 103 (March 2007), 3-38. Stern offers a highly useful analysis of issues of race and ethnicity as they relate to eugenics in Indiana. Indeed, these issues are highly complex and problematic when making historical and contemporary comparisons of views on these constructs. See David R. Roediger, *Working toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York, 2005); and Matthew F. Jacobsen, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998). David Theo Goldberg's *Racial Subjects: Writing on Race in America* (New York, 1997) provides a more general perspective.

<sup>8</sup>Osgood, "From 'Public Liabilities,'" 208-15.

## EUGENICS AND THE LANGUAGE OF SCHOOLS

As acknowledged and established agents of social policy, public schools in Indiana offered a regular stream of published policy statements, regulations, and explications whose terminology and assumptions reflected the dominant strain of eugenic thought in the early 1900s. Of course, determining what constitutes the language of eugenics is a highly complex task, one well beyond the scope of this particular essay and discussed most competently by other scholars. Nevertheless, those involved in public education employed language that was often found in more general studies and discussions of eugenics. While not obviously distinguishable from the language of Progressivism, such terms—and the school contexts in which they regularly appeared—clearly drew on significant elements of eugenic thought and practice.

In Indiana, the connective networks among state-operated agencies meant that certain common theories regarding societal conditions and social development affected policy in a wide array of social services, including schools and other formal educational settings. Consequently, statements of leaders such as Butler, Bliss, and Johnson—often expressed through conference addresses or formal statements of organizations such as the BSC—reflected prevailing attitudes of most of those involved in delivering social services. When Butler pronounced that “[a]s each agency takes up the work with boys or girls, or men or women, it recognizes that feeble-mindedness is one of the great causes of pauperism, vice, immorality, crime, degeneracy, and that it is an increasing cause. . . . the feeble-minded population [is] increasing at practically twice the rate of the normal population,” few questioned the accuracy or authority of his assertion. When Bliss pointedly stated, “I should be faithless to my duty did I not point out to you the great menace to this state, of leaving the 4,500 feeble-minded, now at large in our communities, to their own devices, to marry and reproduce their kind, to fill the police courts of our larger towns and cities, to augment the supply of prostitutes and paupers, as well as the other forms of vice to which a degenerate will surely turn,” his alarm was considered reasonable and noteworthy. When Johnson claimed that “[i]t is known, with certainty, that of all physical or mental traits which are passed down by heredity from parent to child, these peculiar traits which we call idiocy and imbecility, are the most certain to be inherited. Think then what we are doing when we are neglecting these poor creatures. We are allowing a steady increase of a most undesirable class of citizens; we are building

up the burden which our children must bear," the apparent need for social institutions to recognize and address the hereditary dangers of mental disability demanded little if any extra incentive to do just that.<sup>9</sup>

Statements of school professionals during the early 1900s clearly reflected this dominant ideology. Reports of the BSC in 1916 and 1920 emphasized the fixed, inherited nature of mental defect and toed the eugenic line regarding its impact on society: "It is from these unfortunates that the ranks of pauperism and vice and crime are chiefly recruited. . . . feeble-mindedness complicates every form of social activity, the home, the school, the community," stated the 1916 report. "We . . . know that moral and mental characteristics are inherited and behave exactly like physical characters," wrote Donald DuShane, superintendent of the Columbus, Indiana, public schools in 1926. DuShane was a prominent Indiana educator who wrote extensively about school administration issues related to special populations. He also served as secretary of the BSC for a time during the 1920s. "An individual's musical, literary and mathematical ability, moral strength or weakness, cheerful or morose disposition, intellectual ability and quality of temper are determined by the germ plasm of his parents and not by their conduct or training," he argued, adding that public schools needed to serve as agents for solving social problems.<sup>10</sup>

George Carroll, superintendent of the Terre Haute public schools, commented that a major public school responsibility was "to find these misfits as soon as possible and give them the special attention that they require." Even so, the notion that feeble-minded schoolchildren were, because of their fixed condition, unteachable students and undesirable schoolmates found support from Adelaide Baylor of Indianapolis: "Nothing is more disheartening and discouraging than the effort, day after day and week after week, to work on barren soil and find not the

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<sup>9</sup>Amos Butler, "Some Aspects of Our Problem," *Indiana Bulletin*, 105 (June 1916), 65; George Bliss, "The Future Care of the Feeble-Minded," *Indiana Bulletin*, 105 (June 1916), 62; Alexander Johnson, "The State and Her Weakest Children," *Indiana Bulletin*, 33 (June 1898), 105. For an informative discussion of Indiana's efforts to coordinate social services efficiently see Johnson, "Co-ordinating the Work of Social Welfare Agencies," *Indiana Bulletin*, 135 (December 1923), 325-30.

<sup>10</sup>*Twenty-Seventh Annual Report of the Board of State Charities of Indiana* (Fort Wayne, Ind., 1917), 116; *Thirty-First Annual Report of the Board of State Charities of Indiana* (Fort Wayne, Ind., 1921), 116; Donald DuShane, "President's Address: Social Problems and the Public Schools," *Indiana Bulletin*, 147 (December 1926), 352-53.

slightest trace of fruitage after strenuous efforts. . . . The appearance, manner, and conduct of feeble-minded children, especially those of the lower types are oft-times unwholesome and positively pernicious to delicate, sensitive children. . . . [Their] presence . . . is one of the grave problems for the school people of this state and country." Hazel Hansford, a field worker for the ICMD, described how such concerns spilled over to rural schools as well: she depicts in detail her visit to the "dilapidated" Chestnut Ridge school in rural Monroe County, which served "the sulkiest brats' that [the teacher] had ever seen." She commented that "[w]here the stock is uniformly poor as it is in this place, it looks like an uphill job for any teacher or social worker."<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, schools in Indiana and elsewhere eventually did assume a large share of responsibility for addressing the presence of inferior stock in general, and feeble-mindedness in particular. For many, the idea of placing inferior children in public school settings proved highly appealing. In special classes taught by specially trained teachers and using a specially designed curriculum, such children could make significant progress. "The public school which employs modern methods of determining to about what type of education and at about what rate each child is capable of responding...will be meting out justice to more nearly all its children," wrote Herman Young of Indiana University in 1924. Ultimately, according to John Brown, secretary of the BSC in 1928, public schools were to become a key element of "community organization which includes facilities for the identification of those who are feeble-minded, proper facilities for their education, training and supervision; and segregation for those who are an active social menace." Social agencies, supposedly operated with care and thought by civic leaders, were thus charged with acknowledging the superiority of some members of society over others and implementing policies designed to maintain that superiority and minimize the alleged negative impact of social defects of varying backgrounds and descriptions.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>George C. Carroll, "Defective and Retarded Children as a School Problem: Special Classes in Terre Haute," *Indiana Bulletin*, 180 (March 1930), 66; Adelaide Steele Baylor, "The Problem of the Feeble-Minded in the Public Schools," *Indiana Bulletin*, 107 (December 1916), 393-94; Hazel Irene Hansford, "A Social Study of Mental Defectives in County H., Indiana, in 1918," *Indiana University Studies*, 10, study no. 59 (September 1923), 140-41.

<sup>12</sup>Herman H. Young, "Experiments in Public Schools," *Indiana Bulletin*, 136 (March 1924), 28; John A. Brown, "The Mental Defective as a Social Problem," *Indiana Teacher*, 72 (April 1928), 14.

This commitment to fundamental principles of eugenics and progressivist social efficiency entered smoothly into stated missions of schools and school districts. In Terre Haute, for example, public schools emphasized instilling in defective students the ability "to develop self-appraisal, self-direction, self-control and coöperation with others"—in other words, to become compliant citizens, "useful to society in any humble capacity in which they can function with contentment to themselves. . . . Their desires must be so guided and directed that they will desire to do the right thing at the right time." In Bloomington, school officials insisted to the public that the teaching of mentally defective students need not include academic work because "we decided [they] could not learn." When challenged by "the courts or somebody" who said "How do you expect him to learn if you do not try to teach him?" Herman Young, an Indiana University professor and consultant to the Bloomington school district, advised district teachers "to keep on for awhile trying to do the impossible, trying to give these children academic work when they cannot learn it in order to convince people that they cannot do it." The message that there were inferior and superior groups in society and that those of superior stock had the right to make crucial assumptions and decisions regarding the lives of the less fortunate came through clearly.<sup>13</sup>

It is important to note, however, that the language of eugenics had to compete with emerging languages promoting attention to individual student differences and supporting special education programs in Indiana's public schools. Developmental and other more child-centered approaches to public school instruction also factored into progressivist thought and carried into discussions of the best ways to teach children with various defects or deficiencies. Rationales emphasizing social efficiency and control and those stressing individual student need and betterment both supported segregated special education instruction for students with disabilities, yet they represented different views of the appropriate content of such instruction. For the former, schools were expected to socialize children and train them to the maximum extent possible in some form of productive, employable skill so that they would be neither a public burden nor a public irritant. For the latter, schools were charged with understanding a child's natural abilities and tailoring

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<sup>13</sup>Carroll, "Defective and Retarded Children," 65; Young, "Experiments in Public Schools," 28.

an instructional program that recognized possibilities as well as limitations to help them develop to their maximum individual potential. As Dr. Charles Wilson of Evansville argued, "our educators are attempting to individualize education—to help each child to develop to the fullest extent all of his or her potential abilities. . . . it is a responsibility of every school system to see that provision is made to educate each child according to his or her individual endowments." Separate classes and programs that varied widely in the ratio of academic to vocational content came to characterize public school special education.

### EUGENICS, SCHOOLS, AND THE TESTING OF STUDENTS

The Progressive Era embraced not only much of the substance of eugenic thought, but also notions of objective and scientific approaches to addressing individual and social issues—and alleged pathologies. The multifaceted public attack on social ills involved schools, hospitals, social service agencies, benevolent institutions, and limited local government working to identify problems and apply the best scientific principles and practices to determine appropriate solutions. As a respected manifestation of presumed scientific thought and investigation, eugenics validated the concept of examining individuals in detail—their character, background, and demeanor—in order to ascertain their appropriate role in a modern, efficient society. And as a cornerstone of the execution of social policy, public schools naturally became centers of such individual and group examinations. These included mental testing as well as medical and psychological assessments of children at schools or available clinics. The role of the school as a center for comprehensive child assessment, and of the clinic as a means to expand such testing to reach more children, constituted another eugenically influenced arena of social betterment.

Standardized individual and group intelligence testing in Indiana followed patterns established elsewhere across the country: initial use of individual Binet-Simon tests on selected students beginning in the latter 1910s, followed by rapid expansion to large-scale group intelligence testing involving hundreds of thousands of American schoolchildren every year beginning in the early 1920s. Such testing gained wide advocacy and use because it was openly promoted and accepted as a valid, reliable means of slotting students into appropriate classrooms and programs, thus facilitating the schools' function as a sorter and trainer of



children. In addition, according to proponents of eugenics, the scientific objectivity of the IQ score reinforced notions of the hereditary and fixed nature of intelligence, and validated direct social control over inferior groups such as African Americans and immigrants from southern and eastern regions of Europe. For example, Jane Griffiths, an official with the Utah State Department of Education, gave a 1917 speech before the Indiana State Teachers Association in which she advocated extensive mental testing of all American public school children. Five years later, Arthur Estabrook of the ERO described the extensive use of mental testing for children and adults in twelve counties throughout Indiana, including the cities of Richmond and Peru, as well as in the state institution at Fort Wayne, courts, hospitals, and prisons—all as part of surveys conducted by the ICMD. Consequently, public school officials in Indiana almost universally proclaimed mental testing a key factor in helping schools do their jobs.<sup>14</sup>

Testing configurations ranged from large groups of children in sizable urban districts to a few pupils in much smaller-scale sites. With the development of group mental testing around 1920, districts began expanding their programs. Cities including Indianapolis, Gary, Fort Wayne, and Evansville began cautiously administering individual mental testing during the latter 1910s; by 1930, districts in Terre Haute, Shelbyville, and Bloomington had fully operationalized mental testing programs for all enrollees. Test scores were used extensively to stratify students in attempts to make school systems run efficiently and to track students into appropriate courses of study. Smaller, more rural districts in the state trailed in such developments due to low numbers of students and lack of resources for testing. Even so, Hansford used the Stanford Revised Scale in 1918 at the rural Chestnut Ridge school, where she tested

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<sup>14</sup>Jane Griffiths, "Mental Defectives in the Schools," *Proceedings and Papers of the Indiana State Teachers Association, October 31, and November 1, 2, 4, 1917, Indianapolis* (Crawfordsville, Ind., [1918]), 171-79; Arthur H. Estabrook, "The Work of the Indiana Committee on Mental Defectives," *Proceedings and Addresses of the Forty-Sixth Annual Session Held at St. Louis, Missouri, May 18, 19, and 20, 1922. Comprising The Journal of Psycho-Asthenics, Volume XXVII, June 1921 to June 1922* (1922), 12-17; Osgood, "From 'Public Liabilities,'" 213-15. An excellent, thorough discussion of the problematic ascendance of mental testing in the United States is found in Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York, 1981). On the linkages among race, ethnicity, and intelligence testing see, for example, H. H. Goddard, "The Binet Tests in Relation to Immigration," *Journal of Psycho-Asthenics*, 18 (December 1913), 105-10; Goddard, "Mental Tests and the Immigrant," *Journal of Delinquency*, 2 (September 1917), 243-77; and Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*.

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MENTAL SURVEY SCALES

“Cross-Out” Tests.

Schedule E

Name ..... Boy or Girl?.....

Age ..... Birthday ..... Grade .....

Teacher ..... School .....

Place ..... State ..... Date .....

TEST I. VERBAL INGENUITY.

Examples: (a) see a I man ~~on~~.

(b) knife chair the sharp is.

(c) John broken window trees has the.

(1) the cat at see. Score (1) .....

(2) boy was sky the sick. (4) .....

(3) bread sweep will the kitchen I. Total.....

(4) are going yesterday tomorrow we.

(5) me mine give my straw hat.

(6) brown the horse come is.

(7) my suit dollars wear twenty cost new.

(8) know ice big boys how skate to.

(9) their soldiers for fight gun country.

(10) teacher me from gave a pencil my.

(11) brother lamp is my than I older much.

(12) dusty road the is hot and miles.

(13) in the chalk he brightest is boy class our.

(14) house hard to is climb very the hill.

(15) broke his robin the flew little poor wing.

(16) gave me candy brother my of knife a box.

(17) the flood roaring valley came bridge the down.

(18) the song birds flown during the to have south.

(19) boy gold watch brightest over get the will a.

(20) I not Monday do to bag like go to school on.

(21) watch summer the man stole is jail who the in.

(22) old back only the chair legs has three.

(23) told girl I I the to would her with home walk.

(24) man whom the hat say is you uncle my me with.

(25) do not boy the I like who me school in sits desk behind.

“Cross-out” test, Indiana University Department of Psychology, ca. 1920. In addition to evaluating students’ “verbal ingenuity,” the test examined logical and arithmetical skills, and moral judgment.

Courtesy of the Indiana State Archives

### Test I. Verbal Ingenuity

Look at the first test example a, the first example. The words are "see a I man on". In this order the words don't make sense, but they can be made into a sentence if you leave out one word. What is the sentence?..... What is the extra word?..... You see "on" is crossed out, because you can't use it in the sentence.

Look at example b (Knife chair the sharp is). What sentence can you make from these words?..... What is the extra word?..... Cross out the word "chair" in just the way that "on" is crossed out in the first example.

Look at the last example (John broken window trees has the). What is the sentence?..... What is the extra word?..... Cross out the word "trees".

Now—everyone, attention! Work out the other twenty-five sentences in the same way. In each list there is one, **and only one** extra word. Cross it out. (Time allowed pupils, 5 minutes.)

Cross-out test instructions.

Courtesy of the Indiana State Archives

nineteen students and found fifteen to be feeble-minded. In its 1919 and 1922 reports, the ICMMD featured the results of mental testing in a wide range of rural as well as urban areas in the state.<sup>15</sup>

Intelligence testing to ascertain IQ scores and use the results in program planning constituted only a part of schools' efforts to assess children's mental, physical, and psychological states for broader purposes of social engineering. Indeed, by the 1920s, calls were appearing with regularity for comprehensive examinations of all schoolchildren, either at schools or in other appropriate settings. To enhance access to such testing for children and families throughout the state, and to underscore the importance of effective child assessment in ensuring societal health, Indiana supported a number of clinics. Known varyingly as out-patient, traveling psychiatric, mental hygiene, free mental, or by other terms, these facilities offered a variety of medical and psychological examinations, usually at no cost to the clients. However, these clinics varied greatly in terms of the kinds of examinations offered and the extent to which counseling or treatment was provided to parents and other interested parties. Clinics could be supported through school districts, local governments, social service agencies or associations, or institutions

<sup>15</sup>Hansford, "A Social Study," 139-41; Osgood, "Menace of the Feeble-minded," 269-76.

(such as the Indiana School for Feeble-minded Youth). County fairs, popular sites for “better baby” and “better family” competitions during this time, also frequently hosted such clinics to examine the health of the state’s children. The clinics achieved recognition as a crucial element in bringing such testing to all Indiana citizens, regardless of residence or income.<sup>16</sup>

Schools used these clinical assessments to place children in appropriate programs and classes, encourage correct social and hygienic behaviors on the part of families, and organize Indiana’s future adults into groups and occupations that would support an efficient, healthy, and stratified society. The clinics proved essential to the work of the schools because they brought resources, expertise, and tests to school districts and communities that otherwise would not have been able to engage in screenings of children and families. Data gathered by clinics could be provided to the schools, so that the latter would not have to invest their often limited resources on this expensive work. In cases where clinic staffers also worked for the schools, the sharing of resources likely became more valuable to the districts. With the clinics offering assessments, and the schools doing further testing and follow up—such as tracking students according to test results—societal efforts to assess, monitor, and mold as many children as possible for purposes of improvement took a more formal and predictable path. This complementary work exemplified a relatively effective—if limited—effort to coordinate an array of social services for the assumed betterment of society. “Our traveling mental clinic has already fully demonstrated its great value to the schools and other institutions of the state,” commented the directors of the Indiana School for Feeble-minded Youth in their 1924 annual report. “We are greatly encouraged by the attitude of those superintendents who have already availed themselves of the services of the clinic for their schools.”<sup>17</sup>

School districts used mental testing data to plan courses of study and stratify students, attempting to guide children along the lines of

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<sup>16</sup>Edna R. Jatho, “The Mental Clinic,” *Indiana Bulletin*, 136 (March 1924), 29-30; Harold S. Hulbert, “School Clinics,” *Indiana Bulletin*, 191, 192 (March and April 1931), 217-23; Ralph N. Tirey, “Mental Hygiene and the Public Schools,” *Indiana Bulletin*, 167 (February 1929), 66-72; and “Mental Defectives and the Schools,” *Indiana Teacher*, 71 (January 1927), 15.

<sup>17</sup>*Forty-Sixth Annual Report of the Indiana School for Feeble-Minded Youth, Fort Wayne, Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1925), 7.



Sewing Class at Public School No. 13, Indianapolis, 1922. Vocational training for girls included education in modern skills such as court reporting as well as in traditional skills such as sewing.

Courtesy of the Bass Photo Co. Collection, Indiana Historical Society

their predicted life paths. Town school officials such as Charles Wilson, George Carroll, Herman Young, and Shelbyville's William Vogel wrote detailed descriptions of the ways in which test results informed decisions regarding curriculum and placement. While most discussions centered on programs for defective children, test results also began to be used to determine (and in many cases justify) placement of children in vocational tracks, as well as to develop programs for children considered unusually intelligent.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup>Wilson, "Special Provisions," 214-17; Carroll, "Defective and Retarded Children," 63-65; Young, "Experiments in Public Schools," 26-28; William F. Vogel, "Mental Hygiene in the Public Schools," *Indiana Bulletin*, 155 (February 1928), 34-36.

## EUGENICS AND SPECIAL EDUCATION: SUPPORTING SUPERIOR CHILDREN

By 1930, most sizable Indiana school districts had some form of special education for children with disabilities, particularly those with mental retardation, chronic illness, physical limitations, or behavioral problems. One mode of specialized instruction that did not receive as much attention, in terms of the number of students and programs in schools, was that for children identified as superior or gifted. Ironically, in the stratified world of public schooling little room had been made at the top for the state's brightest children who represented the best that the American "race" had to offer. In fact, the notion of a specialized gifted education started slowly throughout the United States. However, attention accelerated with the widespread use of group intelligence testing and with the belief that society needed to identify and nurture its future leaders. Although Indiana established few noteworthy programs in gifted education before 1930, a review of the national picture during the 1920s places state efforts in the context of eugenic thought and school practice.

While much of eugenic ideology had been applied to pathological conditions, these ideas and principles also advanced the cause of superior groups of people. Positive eugenics' emphasis on arranging human genetics to improve society through careful identification and breeding of the nation's strongest, most vigorous, and most talented clearly exemplified this aspect of the field. Consequently, eugenicists put a great deal of energy into researching and discussing the hereditary nature of intelligence and the ways in which the precious national resource of smart, talented citizens could best be utilized. The work, and intellectual lineage, of Francis Galton, E. L. Thorndike, H. H. Goddard, Lewis Terman, and Leta Stetter Hollingworth underscored this concern. All advocated thinking about ways in which the superior elements of society could best be harnessed in the causes of race betterment and social improvement. All viewed intelligence as an inborn trait, with the brightest minds almost always coming from—and staying within—the best families. And all proposed various means of convincing these superior societal members to accept their role at the top and serve society by reproducing at greater rates. These methods ranged from public exhortation to offers of significant financial incentives for producing more children. Supporting and incentivizing society's finest to reproduce more frequently and claim their right to a privileged social position became, to some eugenicists, as



important as earlier efforts to identify, isolate, and eventually extinguish those on the opposite end of the societal spectrum.<sup>19</sup>

These particular eugenic priorities were perhaps most strongly and unapologetically articulated by Hollingworth. A student of Thorndike and a faculty member at Teachers College of Columbia University, Hollingworth wrote a highly regarded text entitled *Gifted Children: Their Nature and Nurture*. Published in 1926, the volume focused on methods of educating gifted children but was infused with the language of eugenics. Hollingworth saw little value in directing social policy and precious resources toward efforts to improve the inferior ranks of society, including the mentally disabled, the criminal, the destitute—those whom she referred to as “biologically unfortunate and socially undesirable deviates.” Instead, she argued that American society should use its resources to strengthen those at the top of the social realm who, because of heredity, were able to benefit from intervention on their behalf. Hollingworth’s conviction that ethnicity was a highly reliable predictor of innate intelligence and social abilities led her to openly question social programs, including those of the public schools, designed to improve the conditions of the lesser elements of society. She believed that public support for special education programs for defective children was a waste and that school resources would be better distributed to the brightest children in school, leading to greater long-term return on investments. Much of her language and argument reveals an open disdain for certain groups of individuals, as well as an entrenched frustration at society’s failure to recognize the role the highest classes could and should play in social improvement.<sup>20</sup>

From a school perspective, Hollingworth’s frustrations were understandable. Historically, children considered to be among the brightest in school had enjoyed few efforts to recognize their talents and provide special opportunities for their development. By the 1920s, a few cities had experimented with special classes or programs for children identified as gifted, with Boston, Cleveland, and Los Angeles being among the most notable. Most of these programs featured the acceleration of such students through the school’s regular curriculum (Boston’s classes, for

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<sup>19</sup>Haller, *Eugenics*, 163-67.

<sup>20</sup>Selden, *Inheriting Shame*, 100-105; Linda M. Kasper, “Feminist and Eugenicist Thinking in a Woman Educator: The Case of Leta Stetter Hollingworth,” Ph.D. diss., Indiana University Bloomington, 2003, 122-32. Quotation is from Hollingworth, quoted in Kasper, 123.

example, were originally called “rapid advancement”). Other enrichment programs kept the child with her age-mates but allowed her to put her talents to better use. However, such endeavors were limited at best. In 1930, there were forty cities in twenty-three states offering about 150 programs, with just 4,000 students enrolled—a miniscule number compared to the hundreds of thousands then enrolled in special classes for mentally or physically disabled children, and compared to the estimated 1,500,000 who were deemed qualified for gifted programs.<sup>21</sup>

Indiana educators had little to show in the area of gifted education before the late 1920s. The state had invested far more educational resources in students with various disabilities than in those identified as having superior qualities. Indianapolis, for example, did not institute classes for the gifted until the early 1950s. Even with the advent of group intelligence testing in the 1920s, those scores were used almost exclusively to identify children with mental disability. In 1923, State Senator C. O. Holmes, a member of the ICMD, echoed Hollingworth when he lamented the lack of concern paid to “that small percentage of unusually qualified mentally, from which comes the greater portion of our leadership.” Holmes argued that “we are not now affording that special care and attention” to gifted children. A 1927 article in the *Indiana Teacher* noted that the typical Indiana public school was “not suited” to cope with the great majority of both gifted and defective students—a theme repeated by the state superintendent of public instruction’s report of 1929.<sup>22</sup>

One notable exception occurred in Columbus during the mid-1920s. DuShane, as a high-profile figure in the world of special education and social services, also served as the superintendent for the Columbus schools. In 1926, the district established an “adjustment school” for children who possessed high IQ scores but were not performing to that level in class. Four years later, DuShane argued that “the

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<sup>21</sup>Robert L. Osgood, *For “Children Who Vary from the Normal Type”: Special Education in Boston, 1838-1930* (Washington, D.C., 2000), 148-51; Osgood, *The History of Inclusion in the United States* (Washington, D.C., 2005), 167-70; *Special Education, the Handicapped, and the Gifted. Report of the Committee on Special Classes*, Charles Scott Berry, PhD, chairman. White House Conference on Child Health and Protection (New York, 1931), 14, 542.

<sup>22</sup>C. O. Holmes, “The State’s Problem in Mental Hygiene,” *Indiana Bulletin*, 133 (June 1923), 120; “Mental Defectives and the Schools,” 15; *Annual Report of the Department of Public Instruction of the State of Indiana, For the Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 1929* ([Indianapolis, 1930]), 8.

schools as at present organized are not well adapted to care for exceptionally bright children, nor is it fully realized how much social significance there is in the proper care of bright children." Echoing Hollingworth's sentiments, he also contended that too much effort had been put into programs for the mentally deficient and that "from the social standpoint a readjustment of the schools which will benefit the gifted child is highly desirable and much more valuable than work at the other extreme."<sup>23</sup>

The Columbus adjustment school specifically targeted students who had been identified as "retardates"—students doing academic work at well below their assumed capabilities based on IQ scores. Approximately twenty-five students were selected "very carefully" based on measured IQ (greater than 120), teacher recommendations, social behavior in school, and home environment. To some extent the curriculum reflected Hollingworth's beliefs that a class for gifted children needed to incorporate freedom, richness in resources, attention to individual needs and interests, and opportunities for collaborative work and leadership experience among the students. Weekly entries were made in a child's file regarding her or his accomplishments, attitude, ability to work well with other students, and even her or his peculiarities. DuShane claimed that students who previously had been "disciplinary problems" or "not taxed to their ability" or "full of energy unconfined" found a successful home in the school. He claimed they developed a strong sense of community, found an environment rich in resources "for their interests and enthusiasms," and benefited greatly from individualized instruction that circumvented the "lock-step" of the traditional school curriculum. He also asserted that students from this first group were now in high school, some "at a very early age," and almost all were doing well.<sup>24</sup>

Noticeably lacking in DuShane's description of, and rationale for, this adjustment school was the strong eugenics-oriented rhetoric on educating the gifted child seen in the writings of Hollingworth and others. DuShane was no stranger to such rhetoric, having used it to describe the function of modern schools in general. Yet with regard to gifted chil-

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<sup>23</sup>Donald DuShane, "Exceptional Children in the Public Schools," *Indiana Bulletin*, 180 (March 1930), 67-68.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 68-70.

dren, his main concern was helping them to achieve their potential as students. "The upper ten per cent of our children in mental ability contain those individuals who are to be the authors, thinkers, philosophers, the constructive leaders of the future....If the schools as at the present organized do not stimulate this group to its greatest activity...then the schools have failed greatly." By 1930, it was estimated that 6 percent of all school students nationwide could be classified as gifted, or 1,500,000 out of more than 25 million schoolchildren. With only a few thousand American students enrolled in programs for gifted children, it was apparent that Indiana, and the rest of the United States, had not yet come close to meeting their needs, and thus had much work to do in properly training the nation's assumed future leadership.<sup>25</sup>

The lack of initiative prior to the 1930s regarding the creation of programs for children identified as gifted was indeed a national story. Although there existed a significant awareness of the possibilities for such programs, most differentiated instruction focused on inferior children because, as Holmes indicated, that group was seen as "the immediate problem . . . with all of the difficulties, menace, and increasing deterioration of the stream of life from the infusing of an ever-enlarging proportion of these mental defectives." The alarmist overtones of negative eugenics dominated social and political discourse—in Indiana and elsewhere—during the Progressive Era, with its emphasis on social pathology and reformist corrective action in response to unsettling, widespread conditions. Hollingworth's appeal to positive eugenics as a rationale for more intensive development of school programs for superior children found an audience among her academic peers such as Terman. However, she did not attract sufficient attention from pragmatic, problem-oriented school officials who faced enormous pressures from both politicians and the public to operate schools efficiently and inexpensively, while also addressing the ubiquitous menace of inferior and uncooperative schoolchildren. Furthermore, objectively identifying unusually intelligent children depended significantly on the use of standardized group intelligence tests, whereas those who were considered defective were more readily obvious—for physical and behavioral reasons as much as for their intellectual performance. The clear and present

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<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 67; *Special Education, the Handicapped, and the Gifted*, 537.

threat of such children had demanded attention and resources decades before the use of group tests gained wide currency and was in line with the negative and fearful implementation of eugenic practice so common during the early 1900s.<sup>26</sup>

The belief that public schools constitute one of the most important and potentially effective vehicles for ensuring societal health and social progress in the United States has a long and remarkable history. As such, public education became deeply involved in a wide range of Progressive reform movements. During the first three decades of the twentieth century, a series of reform efforts overlapped, complemented, and at times contradicted each other—all with the idea that change was necessary if America was to assume its destiny as a vigorous nation and world leader. Eugenics was certainly a major factor in such efforts. The notion that a science-based, objective approach to reducing pathological conditions in society—while simultaneously reinforcing the entrenchment of all that was best about society—could make reform more effective, and permanent, appeared highly promising to many reformers looking for answers.

Determining the extent to which eugenic thought influenced the principles and practices of public school professionals across the country—particularly in Indiana—is, however, a challenging task. As this article has shown, many of those principles found their way into the language of educational leaders and into the structures of educational and social programs designed for school-aged children. In Indiana, the strong interconnections among state medical, social, and educational leaders, as personified by the Board of State Charities and exemplified by the work of the Indiana Committee on Mental Defectives, assured that schools would have direct access to the ideas of prominent leaders in the field of eugenics. The state's strong relationship with the national Eugenics Records Office and its representatives spilled over into education: ERO fieldworkers paid close attention to schools, and to the educational status of children in their reports; the reports then found their way promptly onto the desks of the state's political leadership. Indiana's

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<sup>26</sup>Holmes, "The State's Problem," 120; Leonard P. Ayres, *Laggards in Our Schools: A Study of Retardation and Elimination in City School Systems* (New York, 1913). Ayres's widely read book underscored the high priority nationwide of "slow" or "retarded" students disrupting the smooth functioning of schools.

mental and psychological clinics, again following national patterns, represented the state's desire to do as much as possible to ensure the improvement of society through the promotion of the strength, vigor, and vitality of its youth and families. Through the clinics' efforts, many schools were able to stratify both curriculum and students to ensure the proper preparation of the latter according to their presumed inherent interests, skills, and station. Ascertaining whether Indiana matched or surpassed similar work in other states—especially neighbors with relatively advanced public school systems such as Ohio and Michigan—is also quite a challenge. Furthermore, while Indiana offers an interesting case study, determining the extent to which its actions in this arena served as models for other states requires more extensive research on specific developments elsewhere.

Indeed, any real influence of eugenics on public school operation remains masked. The intellectual and social ferment of the early 1900s covered a broad landscape of political, social, philosophical, medical, and even theological worldviews that often overlapped and borrowed extensively from each other. As the umbrella under which most of these efforts took place, Progressivism was itself a complex set of overlapping and at times contradictory views and assumptions. This was nowhere more apparent than in the world of education, where examples of eugenic language and practice intermingled with those of experiential education, behavioral and developmental psychology, business and factory models of schooling, social Darwinism, and curricular tracks and programs that ranged from the classical to the vocational. Each of these theories of, or approaches to, the education of children in schools boasted their own principles, narratives, perspectives, advocates, and terminology—but the primary goals were self-advancement and public acceptance. Many of these theories found common ground with eugenics, some more so than others. But to draw a single, direct line of impact from broad educational policies based on a science of human reproductive engineering to actual practices in school buildings and classrooms is impossible. The field of eugenics exhibits a remarkable complexity: it is a complicated, contradictory body of influences, beliefs, and practices, crafted by people with multiple agendas and perspectives.

Public schools are fundamentally practical places: although theory and philosophy are by no means ignored, the value of any school initiative, regulation, program, or practice is most rigorously measured in its day-to-day success. While certainly aware of public interest in eugenics, school leaders in Indiana ultimately argued in favor of, or against, cer-



tain policies and practices based on whether they would work in the schools. Features such as curriculum and student tracking, special education for students with disabilities, vocational education, health education (including mental hygiene), large-scale mental testing, and education for superior children could claim some of their inspiration and support from eugenic thought and practice. Nevertheless, justifications for the presence of these programs and initiatives in public education depended at least as much on their contributions to efficient school operation and the practical success of students and teachers in classrooms as on their origins in eugenics or other social policy. Consequently, the great majority of discussions proposing, explaining, and defending these typical school features emphasized their practical impact.

Race betterment and social improvement may well have been on the minds of many when considering school policy and practice; the Indiana experience offers ample support for that assumption. Most documents (official records, professional literature, news media) reveal school officials' primary day-to-day concerns focused on smooth management, student control, efficient use of scarce resources, and particularly, public approval. It is intriguing to consider that such an emphasis on efficient scientific approaches to school administration and pedagogy might well reflect eugenic input. Eugenic theory certainly can be seen in many aspects of Indiana education: its focus on social efficiency, its acceptance of various social groups, and its dispassionate approach to judging and training children. Ultimately, however, it becomes apparent that eugenics was by no means the sole factor in determining public school development during this era; other features of progressivist thought also played key roles. Thus in Indiana, with its strong and interconnected support of the ideals of eugenics as well as of other principles of the Progressive Era among the civic and professional leadership, eugenics and public school education during the early 1900s formed a strong, but not exclusive, relationship.

